

Boom times

Every day, young people are moving to China's booming cities as their parents search for work

by Jim Yardley in Beijing

In a dusty suburb of China's capital city of Beijing, Yuan He, 10, sits quietly in her fifth-grade class. There are 57 students in the unheated classroom, each dressed in a winter coat to keep warm. These kids are all **migrants**. Their parents moved to Beijing from 11 different rural provinces in search of work.

A quarter century ago, most Chinese would have spent their lives growing corn, rice, or wheat under a **Communist** government that made it difficult for farmers to move to cities or change jobs. Today, the Communist Party still controls China, yet the country's people are anything but locked in place. More than 150 million migrant workers have left farms and are now doing the grueling work of building modern China.

Yuan He is the daughter of a construction worker. She arrived in Beijing five years ago from the vast central province of Sichuan. One of the smart-

Wu Zhuangxuan in his unheated classroom. During the cold winter months, students must bundle up while learning.

in CHINA

est students in her class, Yuan He is already learning English. Farming does not figure in her future plans.

"I want to be a scientist," she told *JS*, standing behind her wobbly, wooden desk as her classmates listened. "But my mother says I should be a lawyer or a doctor because they make more money."

The Next Superpower?

With 1.3 billion people, China has long been the world's most populous nation. Now it is also one of the

world's fastest-growing economies. It is emerging as the next superpower to rival the United States.

Factories along China's coast make clothes, electronics, toys, and many other goods sold in stores in the U.S. and elsewhere around the world. Beijing is hurriedly building stadiums, subway lines, roads, and thousands of structures for the 2008 Summer Olympics.

Although much is changing in the new China, much remains unchanged. China still has an **authoritarian** gov-